

## **August 15, 2016, BLT Agenda Item Comments**

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items submitted by:  
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### ***Item 1. Minutes of the June 20, 2016 and July 18, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meetings***

#### ***Minutes of the June 20, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meeting***

In my written comments to the Board at its July 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, I noted some typos in the draft of the June 20<sup>th</sup> minutes presented there. It appears those typos have been corrected in the current draft.

#### ***Minutes of the July 18, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meeting***

I didn't notice any obvious typos in the July 18<sup>th</sup> draft minutes, although on handwritten agenda packet page 14, under Item 12 ("Friends of the Library Liaison Report") there is a phrase shown in strike-out type ("~~group was~~") that appears to have been edited out in the preparation process, but has been inadvertently left in. Presumably it should be deleted entirely.

### ***Item 2. Customer Comments***

At its meeting a year ago, the Board was informed the library received, and responded to, at least 16 written comments during the month of July, which seemed fairly typical at the time. I am curious if staff has a theory for why the number of customer comments has declined so greatly, to three this July and five in June.

Regarding the last comment about bathing in library restrooms, is it obvious, as staff seems to assume, which restroom (or even branch) it is referring to?

In the future it might be helpful to indicate in the left hand column which facility written comment cards were returned at.

### ***Item 3. Library Activities***

On agenda packet page 17, it strikes me the [online blurb](#) describing the "Testing & Education Reference Center" database could be improved: "*Provides users with in-depth information on colleges and universities, graduate and professional programs, distance learning and more*" does not begin to tell me its focus is on preparing for entrance and other sorts of examinations. Instead, it makes me think it's a database of information about schools, which it doesn't seem to be at all.

With regard to the "Career Online High School" announced on the same page, this sounds like a very important service, but one one might expect to be offered on a County-wide basis, for example as an initiative of the County Board of Education. What was the impetus for this? Is it indeed being coordinated with other agencies? Is there any cost to the users? Is NBPL

receiving assistance with the funding? (I notice there is further information about this on agenda packet pages 18 and 19)

#### ***Item 4. Expenditure Status Report***

The “Expenditure Status Report FY 2015-2016” on page 25 of the agenda packet appears to indicate the department ended the year with a surplus of \$159,990, of which the final footnote says \$6,189 will roll over into the current year’s budget. Is the implication that the remainder of the surplus is not “encumbered” and will be returned to the City’s General Fund for possible use on non-library-related purposes (I could be wrong, but I believe the City Council has indicated the GF surplus will be used in part for paying down unfunded pension liabilities and in part on sewer infrastructure)?

The Board may be interested in the answer to this question: what are the consequences if a department ends the year with expenditures exceeding budget? Is that a bad thing? Or does it increase the likelihood the budget will be increased in future years?

#### ***Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List***

I notice an “Annual Budget Update” is not scheduled until February of next year. If the intent is to discuss the budget needed for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2017, that may be too late in the process to have much influence, particularly if the Board foresees the need for any major increases. I have heard the internal City-wide budget preparation process starts in October.

#### ***Item 6. Information Technology Update***

The following comments about IT as it relates to the library come to mind:

1. What has happened to the previously announced roll-out of a redesigned NBPL website?
2. Why does the library turn off its access to WiFi when the branches are closed? Having the service available is useful to patrons who are stopping by to return a book, or otherwise visiting the branch and find it closed. The Civic Center provides 24-hour WiFi, NBPL used to, and I believe most other libraries in the County do.
3. With the advent of the library’s CENIC broadband internet access, is the system of mandatory log-in to connect a personal device to the WiFi signal really necessary? Again, the Civic Center has no such restriction.
4. If log-ins are necessary, must they be restricted to a single log-in at a time? That can be frustrating to users who may wish to operate a library device and a personal device at the same time. I presume the conflict can be avoided by requesting a guest pass for the second device, but if that’s true I think the message telling the patron they’re “blocked from access because they’re already logged in” should be upgraded to suggest that work-around.

5. When the library upgrades its IT hardware, what does it do with the old equipment? Like used books, it would seem much of it would be useful to someone, somewhere. Could the Friends sell it? Or is it directed to a worthy project?
6. Could IT improve the automation system whereby BLT meetings get noticed on the City's home page? Currently, the translation of items listed on the City's online calendar to notices on the home page is hit or miss.
7. Likewise, could IT improve the workflow whereby past BLT agenda packets get archived in a more useful, searchable and accessible format (as is done with City Council agenda packets)?
8. Are there any updates on IT's plans for recovery of the NBPL records in the event of an unplanned data loss? Or in steps taken to prevent hacking of the NBPL records?

### ***Item 7. Proposed Library Closures for Winter Holidays 2016***

To the best of my knowledge it has been a long-standing practice of NBPL, and most public libraries, to be closed on all federal holidays (with the possible exception of Columbus Day), as well as possibly on Easter Sunday. It was also often the practice to close a little early on the day before many holidays (such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's). Other than on those days, it is my recollection the library, and its branches, observed their normal hours.

Hence, even though many retail stores that used to observe federal holidays no longer do so (some even, now, being open extended hours for "holiday" sales), I don't think it is yet the expectation of any large segment of the public that a public institution like a school or library would be open on those days. Indeed, the NBPL website already posts a [closure schedule](#) built around the federal holidays (strangely *already* saying NBPL will be closed on January 2, 2017, but *not* on December 26, 2016) and Library Board meeting dates have been shifted to accommodate the expected Monday closures.

By contrast, the period 2009-2011, in which NBPL followed the City Manager's directive to require City employees to use holiday time between Christmas and New Year's so that City Hall could be closed, was, for many reasons, viewed as an unwelcome aberration by many, particularly when applied to NBPL.

If December 26, 2016, and January 2, 2017, are indeed being observed by most of the country as major state and federal holidays (there seems some slight uncertainty about their status), then staff's proposed schedule seems like a reasonable one to me, although I'm not entirely sure of the rationale for the reduced evening hours on the non-holiday days.

### ***Item 8. Library Staffing Report***

The report is quite helpful in explaining the NBPL structure, although it might be helpful to clarify the Board's role in this picture.

There also seem to be few minor discrepancies and uncertainties about it:

1. The staff report says there are 39 part-time and 37 full time employees. Attachment B (lower right corner) gives the same total, but with 40 part-time and 36 full time (presumably counting the vacant “Adult Services/Ref” Librarian III management position?).
2. Whatever the correct total, the number of part-time *people* is difficult to relate to the 25.53 FTE part-time *positions* in Attachment A.
3. There seems to be a typo in the footnote to Attachment A saying that 0.50 of the 0.75 FTE literacy position is in the City budget but “*the other 0.25* [not “0.52”] *does not show in that document.*” What is the significance of the 0.25 not being in the adopted budget? Is a budget amendment needed?
4. If the organization chart of Attachment B is correct, the administration of the CdM branch is anomalous, since it is depicted as operating under “Adult Services/Ref” division rather than under “Branch Serv” (like the other two branches).
5. It is similarly unclear how the “Adult Services/Ref” and “Support Serv” divisions interact with, and support, the Mariners and Balboa branches. Do some of their personnel actually work at those branches?

### ***Item IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS***

I applaud the effort to post the agenda packet with the pages numbered consecutively from start to end. However, a consequence of this seems to be that the pages, at least this month, have been posted in a PDF “image” format that is not machine readable or searchable, as they previously were. Hopefully that feature can be restored, but if not I think having searchable packets is more important than having an handy page number referencing system.